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AS A FRENCH JOURNALIST SEES THEM *

Stéphane Lauzanne is the editor of the Paris *Matin*, one of the most widely circulated and most influential daily newspapers in the world. But he is more than this, although this is already a great deal. There are other newspapers in Europe, as successful and important as the *Matin*, about whose editors we Americans know little or nothing. Stéphane Lauzanne is not only a useful citizen of France, he is also a friend of America and a student of American institutions. He has visited us two or three times, during the war as a member of the French High Commission; he is a frequent contributor to the columns of several American magazines; and in 1918 he published in this country his little book *Fighting France*. If we accept him at his own estimate,—or more strictly at his estimate of the journalistic fraternity, for he is too modest a man and too tactful a Frenchman to boast of his personal merits,—he has something to tell us which we can believe and profit by. “The journalist”, he remarks in the picturesque preface to his latest book, “has in reality only one ancestor, Diogenes. He goes through life, lantern in fist, searching everywhere for a man. . . . The journalist, for all his faults, has one virtue which the politician has not: he is sincere. If in his judgments of men and things, he is not always free from passion, he is at least almost always exempt from personal interest. He has no plan of replacing those whom he criticizes, nor any expectation of being elected to office by those whom he praises. He has no desire for power. . . .” If all this is not always as true as it sounds plausible,—witness, for example, Monsieur Lauzanne’s *confrère* and pet aversion, the American journalist William Randolph Hearst,—it seems clear that Lauzanne himself, though the determined champion of a cause (the cause, namely, of safety and justice for France), deserves his general reputation for sanity and sincerity.

* *Les Hommes que j’ai vus. Souvenirs d’un journaliste.* Par Stéphane Lauzanne. Paris: Arteme Fayard. 1920.

On Lafayette day, 1918, Monsieur Lauzanne and our late ambassador to Germany, James W. Gerard, were the speakers at a celebration in Milwaukee. In his speech on that occasion Gerard was vehement and bitter in his demand that Germany be made to suffer for her crimes and that the Kaiser, as well as the other leading culprits, be brought speedily to the bar of judgment. Likewise, Premier Lloyd George, in December of the same year,—Lloyd George, whom Lauzanne is fond of styling 'The Eel',—declared in an address at Bristol that Germany must pay to the last penny, or that Britain would "go into her pockets". Lauzanne himself had never been so violent. He had never asked that Germany be punished,—partly, it would seem, for the cynical reason that he considered it impossible to show her the need and purpose of punishment. His position, stated with that convincing clarity which he always commands, was simply that she must make reparation and give permanent guarantees, not for her own disciplining, but for France's safety. Lloyd George and others might swing from indignation toward Germany to something like sympathy with her; Lauzanne and his ilk remained perfectly consistent in their contention that Germany had forfeited all right to consideration; that the one great aim of the world reorganizers must be to insure the rest of the world security and freedom. "It is possible", he writes in an American magazine, "that vanquished Germany has a right to pity. But it is much more certain that victorious France has a right to life."

Identified as Lauzanne thus is with the cause of France's rehabilitation, the reader takes up his recent book of biographies (*Les Hommes que j'ai vus. Souvenirs d'un journaliste*) with the expectation that his estimate of the notables he proposes to discuss will be largely determined, for each of them, by that distinguished character's attitude toward France. Colonel House he heartily approves. Colonel House found ministerial France and ministerial England, as late as the early summer of 1914, immersed in national wrangles and careless of the German menace, and cried his Cassandra prophecies—an unfortunate figure to apply to the taciturn Colonel House, but it seems the best available—into deaf ears. Moreover, Colonel House has said that France has

two virtues, the virtue of the soldier and the virtue of the civilizer; that she is at the same time the cradle of world civilization and the cradle of the most warlike race in history. As for Theodore Roosevelt, Monsieur Lauzanne is eloquent in his admiration. Everybody knows Roosevelt's attitude toward Germany; and Roosevelt said that France ". . . will remain, of all nations, the one whose figure is the most heroic and the most charming". He is impressed with the penetration of ex-President Raymond Poincaré, who saw the war on the horizon at least as far back as the beginning of 1912, and tried to persuade France to make ready. He has unsparing praise for Ambassador Jusserand, for his dignified and gentlemanly French propaganda in this country, which never condescended to the sophistication and dishonesty of a Bernstorff, and which succeeded because it was clean and candid. And he dislikes Clemenceau, Lloyd George, Wilson, Hearst and a motley crew of others because in one or another of widely different ways, they have failed to work for the permanent security and prosperity of France. However his title may run, Monsieur Lauzanne has only one subject.

But he handles it well. His article in the *Outlook* for July 7th, 1920, on *What the War Cost France in Art Treasures* is the best place to which an American could go for a vivid and exact impression of the war's effect on the artistic monuments of the north of France. And in April of the same year he had published in the *North American Review*, under the spirited title *France's Prisoner of the Republic*, a masterly presentation, in small compass, of the functions of the French President, with a study of Clemenceau which demonstrated his unfitness for the position. And everywhere his love of France, his dislike of her enemies and his distrust of the lukewarm, are so firmly and finely put that it is rarely easy to disapprove and scarcely ever possible not to admire.

And it is a relief to note that this vigorous partisan, critical as he is of certain Americans, is on the whole a sturdy friend of America. Back in the blackest days of the war, he told in the *Forum* of a small boy he had chanced upon in a French school, busy with a copy of a United States history. "What do you think of the United States?" the journalist asked. "I have discovered", said the little fellow, "that America is the only country that we

have never fought." And Editor Lauzanne cherishes the hope that our past relations are a guarantee of friendship for the future. He attributes Jusserand's success at gaining friends here for France to his intimate knowledge of the American temper; and he tells us how he himself failed to carry with him his auditors at Columbia University during the war, because, addressing them on France's claims in Alsace-Lorraine, he thought it sufficient to give vent to his patriotic emotions; and how, perceiving his error and profiting by it, he was received with enthusiastic approval two weeks later at the University of South Carolina, where he took the precaution to go back of 1871, to establish France's right to the region by the citation of the Mulhouse referendum of 1798, the treaty of Westphalia in 1648, and the Friedwald treaty of 1552. The inference is pleasant. We Americans are cautious of the demagogue; a nation of David Crocketts, we make sure that we are right, and then step out decidedly. Beset as we still are with questions no less serious than the one we answered so firmly in the spring of 1917, let us hope that in every case the event will prove Editor Lauzanne a solid judge of national character.

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